July 2.

XXII
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ARTICLES OF ACCVSATION AND IMPEACHMENT

Of the Houſe of Commons, and all the Commons of ENGLAND

AGAINST

VVilliam Pierce

Doctor of Divinitie and Biſhop of *Bath and Wells.*

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XX

PIERCE
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Articles of Accuſation and impeachment by the Comons Houſe of *Parliament* againſt *William Pierce*, Doctor of Divinity, and Biſhop of *Bath* and *Wells*.

1. THat hee hath by his owne arbitrary power againſt Law ſince he was Biſhop of Bath and wells (being about ten yeares ſpace) of purpoſe to keepe the people in ignorance, and hinder the Salvation of their Soules which he ſhould promote, ſuppreſſed all Lectures within his Dioceſſe, both in Market Townes and elſewhere, aſwell thoſe that the Miniſters kept in their ſeverall cures, as others that were maintained by ſeverall yearely ſtipends (given by the founders) out of their piety and devotion, for ſuch goodneſſe, or by the voluntary aſſiſtance of neighbour Miniſters; ſome of which * Lectures had continued for 50. 40. 30. yeares, without interruption, and where countenanced by his predeceſſors, who uſed to preach at ſome of them in their turnes.

Among theſe he hath ſuppreſſed the ancient weekly lecture at the City of Bath, whither many Nobles, and other ſtrangers reſort, eſpecially in the ſpring and fall, who by reaſon of their ſickneſſe, both deſire & need preaching for the conſolation & inſtruction of their ſoules, of which now they are there deſtitute, to their great diſcomfort.

* Iohn 5. 14. I dare ſay no Commentator whatſoever, ever made ſo ill an application of this Text.

2. That in ſtead of incouraging, he hath ſuſpended, excommunicated and otherwiſe vexed the ſaid Lectures; glorying in this ſo doing *and thanking God that he had not a Lecture left in all his Dioceſſe*; the very name whereof he ſaid he diſliked, and affirmed unto *Maſter Cunnant* a Miniſter, who deſired a continuance of a Lecture, that hee would not leave one within his Dioceſſe; the Biſhop alleadging, that though there was neede of Preaching in the infancy of the Church of the Apoſtles time, yet now their was no ſuch neede; and thereupon required the ſaid Miniſter upon his Canonicall obedience, not to Preach: and in like manner he dealt with many other godly Miniſters within his Dioceſſe. And in particular he ſuſpended Maſter *Deveniſh* the Miniſter of *Bridgewater*, for preaching the Lecture in his owne Church on the market day there, (which Lecture had continued from Queene *Elizabeths* time till then;) and refuſed to abſolve him, till he had promiſed never to preach it more; upon which premiſe, the ſaid Biſhop abſolved him with this admonition of our Saviour, moſt prophanely applyed, * *Goe thy way ſin no more, leaſt a worſe thing happen to thee.* And not content to put downe Lectures in his own Dioceſſe, he hath indeavored the ſuppreſſion of them in others, by conventing ſome miniſters of his Dioceſſe before him, as namely one Maſter *Cunnant* and Maſter *Stickland*) and threatning to ſuſpend them for preaching their turnes at Lectures in other Dioceſſes neere them.

3. That in oppoſition to Preaching, and the Sirituall good of the peoples Soules, he hath moſt impiouſly, and againſt Law put downe all afternoone Sermons on the Lords day, throughout his Dioceſſe, and charged the Miniſters both publique in his viſitation, and privately, *not to preach at all on the Lords day on the afternoone, upon any occaſion under paine of ſuſpenſion*: after which charge he ſuſpended one Maſter *Corniſh* a Miniſter, onely for preaching a funerall Sermon on a Lords day Evening.

4. That divers godly Miniſters of his Dioceſſe, being reſtrained from Preaching, did thereupon take great paines, to Chatechiſe the people in the principals of Religion, on the Lords day in the afternoone, enlarging themſelves upon the queſtions and anſwers of the Catechiſme, in the Common-prayer booke, for the peoples better inſtruction, uſing ſome ſhort prayers before or after that exerciſe: of which the ſaid Biſhop having intelligence convented the ſaid Miniſters before him, reproving them ſharpely for the ſame, threatning to puniſh them if they perſiſted in that way, which he ſaid, *was a Chatechiſme Sermon-wiſe, and as if they preached*; charging them *that they ſhould aske no queſtions, nor receive any other anſwers from the people, but ſuch as were contained in the Catechiſme in the Service booke*, which ſome not obſerving, were convented thereupon before the ſaid Biſhop, and puniſhed, as namely Maſter *Barret* Rector of *Barwick*, who was enjoyned Penance for tranſgreſſing the Biſhops ſaid order; and likewiſe *Humphrey Blake*, Churchwarden of *Bridgewater*, was enjoyned penance by the Biſhop, for not preſenting Maſter *Deveniſh* Miniſter there, *for that he expounded upon the Church-Catechiſme on the Lords day in the afternoone, and made a ſhort prayer before he began the ſame*; the Biſhop alleaging, that it was againſt his order and command, as is aboveſaid.

5. That he hath both by precept & example moſt prophanely oppoſed the due ſanctification of the Lords day, by approving and allowing of prophane Wakes and Revels on that day, contrary to the Lawes and Statutes of this Realme, for which purpoſe he * *commanded afternoone ſervice on the Lords day not to be long, that ſo the people might not bee hindred from their Recreations*; preſſed and injoyned all the Miniſters in his Dioceſſe in their proper perſons, to reade the booke of ſports, in their ſeverall pariſh Churches, in the middeſt of Divine Service at morning prayer on the Lords day, contray to the words, and perport of the ſaid booke, which ſome Miniſters (as Maſter *Humphry Chambers*, and Maſter *Thomas* refuſing to doe, he therefore ſuſpended them both from their Office and Benefice and kept them excommunicated for divers yeares, notwithſtanding the ſaid booke was by the Biſhops Order publiſhed in their churches by others, he convented the miniſters of *Beererockham* before him, for *having two Sermons on the ſaid pariſh Revell day*, alleadging

* It appears by Act. 20.20.31. Act. 2 46.c.3. & 4. & 5. Lu. 21 37.38. Ioh. 8 22.19.47.2.tim 4.2. by Baſil. Magnus Hexameron. Hom. 2.7.8.9. & Hom. in Pſal. 114. by Saint Chryſoſtom. Hom. 10.22. & 34. in Gen. Ad Pop. Antioch. Hom. 19.13. & 5. De ſacerdotio. l. 6. hom. de Lazaro. by Auguſti Concio. 2. in Pſal. 68. Tract. 16.18. & 21. in Ioan. and other Fathers, that Chriſt, his Apoſtles, and the Fathers preached every day, and forenoone and afternoone on the Lords day, how dare then this prelate thus to affront their practiſe?

* O prophane Impiety and Iniuſtice, to puniſh miniſters for preaching, Catechiſing, and doing that which God enioynes them.

* Impiety and prophaneneſſe which no age can patterne, many miniſter have been ſuſpended and cenſured for ſhorning the Service, that they might preach the longer, and yet they are commanded to corral it by this Biſhop, that the people might have more time to play in Gods own day

that

that it was a hinderance to the ſaid Revell, and to the utterance of the Church-Ale, provided to be ſpent on that day. He convented and puniſhed one Maſter *Thomas Elford* a Miniſter, for Preaching at the Pariſh of *Mountagu*, upon the Revell day upon the Praphet *Joels* exhortation, *to faſting, weeping and mourning*, charging him, *that not onely his Sermon, but his very Text was* ſcandalous to the Revell, and gave offence to the meeting.* And for the ſame reaſon, the ſaid Biſhop commanded the ſaid Church-wardens of the Pariſh of *Batcombe*, to blot out of the Church wall, this Text of Scripture therein written, taken out of *Eſay* 58.13.14.* *If thou turne away thy foote from the Sabboth, from doing thy pleaſure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord honorable, and ſhalt honour him, not doing the owne waies nor finding thine owne pleaſure, nor ſpeaking thine owne words, then ſhalt thou delight thy ſelfe in the Lord; and I will cauſe thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feede thee with heritage of* Jacob *thy Father, for the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it.* And he likewiſe cauſed to be raſed out this clauſe in *Doctor Biſſe* his monument in that Church, formerly Paſtor there; he was an enemy to heatheniſh Revell. To countenance which Revells, the ſaid Biſhop (in oppoſition to the orders of the Judges of Aſſiſe, and Juſtices of Peace of *Somerſet-ſhire*, for the ſuppreſſing of Sports and Revells and their Petition to the King, to that purpoſe) did call before him divers miniſters of his Dioceſſe and preſented unto them a writing in approbation and commendations of the ſaid ſports and Revells, whereupon many of the ſaid Miniſters ſubſcribed their names, by the Biſhops perſwaſions, which writing the ſaid Biſhop ſent up to the *Archbiſhop of Canterbury*, who after the receipt thereof ſuppreſſed the Juſtices Petition. And partly after the booke for ſports and Revells on the Lords day was publiſhed.

*A pious Epiſcopall reaſon, fitter for an Alewife then a Biſhop an Atheiſt then a Prelate.

* O blaſphemy why was not the Revell rather ſcandalous to the text.

* O the deſperate impiety and prophaneneſſe of this Biſhop, who might as well obliterate this Scripture out of the Bible, as out of the Church wall. This ſpeech he borrowed from Canterbury, who might doe well to prove that God almighty ſits actually on the Lords Table, & that as well when there is no Communion there, as when there is.

6. That hee hath both by example and cammand, contrary to the Lawes of the Land, introduced into all or moſt Churches in his Dioceſſe ſundry Innovations in the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, and other new inventions of his owne, tending to Popery and Superſtition: (as namely, ſetting up of Alters, and enjoyning the ſeats about them to be taken away, ſaying, * *none ſhall ſit equall with or above God Almighty*; bowing and crin ing to the ſaid Altars, (and reading the ſecond and third ſervice at the Alter) and enjoyned the ſtrict obſervation of them under the heavieſt Cenſures of the Church; in ſo much that the Communion Table of *Stretton* in his Dioceſſe, which he had cauſed to be railed in Altarwiſe, being brought downe againe in his former place and not turned to the Eaſt, thereupon no Communion was there permitted to the Pariſhioners on *Palme-Sunday* and *Eaſterday* 1637. the miniſter having received *an Order* from the ſaid Biſhop, * *not to adminiſter the Communion untill the Table was againe ſet up Alterwiſe*: and cauſed deverſe to be puniſhed for not ſtanding up at the Goſpel and *Glorid Patri*. And he hath likewiſe forced divers pariſhes, as *Tanto Shepton Mallet*, and others, to their intolerable coſt, to ſet up *Organs*,

O monſtrous ſuperſtition ſacriledge & impiety, to deprive the people of the Sacrament, becauſe the Table ſtood not after his new fancy No age I am certain yeelds ſuch a preſident.

* where

where there were none at all, or not a long time before; causing the Churchwardens to levie mony towards the building of them, upon the Parishioners, against their wills, and punishing them in his Ecclesiasticall Court, that would not pay towards them, and that hee hath put the County of *Somerset* to excessive expences, by reason of such Innovations as aforesaid.

It seemes his Lordship delighted more in piping then preaching, and will have men goe merrily dancing not mourning to heaven.

7. That he hath contrary to Law, vexed and molested in his Ecclesiasticall Courts, divers of the Clergy and Laity of his Diocesse for trivial and small matters; excommunicated and vexed divers Churchwardens; for not rayling in the communion Table, and placing it Alterwise against the East wall of the Chancell; and by name, the Churchwardens of *Beckington*; whom he not excommunicated, but likewise caused them and others to be unjustly indicted at the open Assizes held in the County in Lent, 1636. as for a Riot in hindring the removing of the Table in that Church, putting the said Parish to the expence of 1800. pound or more, and not absolving the Churchwardens from their excommunion, till the they had done such open and ignominious pennance, as the said Bishop enjoyned them, in three eminent Parish Churches within his Diocesse as likewise at the Market-crosse at *Wells*. The performance of which pennance wrought so farre upon *Iames Wheeler* one of the said Churchwardens that thereupon he fell into a consumption through griefe, and so dyed; saying often before his death, *that the performance of the said pennance being so ignominious and against his Conscience, was the cause of his death*; and by his vexatious suites in his Ecclesiasticall Courts he hath raised his Registers office in former Bishops time not worth above 60. pound *per annum*, to the value of 3 or 4 hundred ponnds or more by the yeare.

8. That the said Bishop hath undoubtedly and against Law, pressed the Oathes *Ex Officio* upon divers inhabitants of *Wells* without complaint or accusation, and likewise the Oath of *Deanes Rurall*, with other unlawfull Oathes, both upon the Clergie and Laity within his Diocesse, and other places; and suspended and excommunicated divers of them that refused to take the said Oathes: and that not only in his Consistory Court, but in his owne private Chamber, there being none but a Register with him.

9. That he hath for his owne Lucre and gaine extorted divers summes of money against Law, as of one *Fort* one of the Churchwardens of *South Pederton* twenty pounds. And also of one Master *Francklyn* the some of three pounds (besides the some of ten pounds given in Fees and rewards to the Bishops servants) for instituting him into the Personage of *Standerweeke*. And hath likewise exacted the summe of sixe shillings eight pence or more, of divers Churchwardens and Parishes within his Diocesse, onely for not ringing the Bells when hee passed through the bounds of their severall Parishes, in his Visitation, though privately without giving them any notice of his comming that way,

10. That he hath against Law deferred and denyed Institutions upon presen-

preſentations to Benefices, practiſing in the interim under hand to conferre the ſame upon his Sonne, ſervants, or other dependants, and to deprive the Patrons of their rights: and hath even by force, againſt all law and equity, conferred ſome of the Benefices upon his ſonne, ſervants, and dependants, *viz.* upon his ſonne, the Parſonage of *Buckland*, and endeavored by the lik force to conferre the Perſonage of *Standerweeke* upon his ſaid ſonne, and other Parſonage upon his ſervants and allyes, and did againſt Law and by force conferr the Uicarage of *Hynſtridge* upon his ſervant *Flamſtead*.

11. That hee hath tampered with witneſſes examined by and before him upon Oath, to make them teſtifie untruths, and hath falſified their depoſitions, ſetting downe his owne words and what hee would have them depoſe, in ſtead of what they teſtified; as namely in the *Caſe* of the Church-wardens of *Beckington*, and in that of M. *Ienes* Miniſter of *Beercrocombe*.

12. That hee is a common vexer, perſecuter and moleſter of worthy and painefull Miniſters, and a countenancer of thoſe who are negligent ſcandalous and prophane, as namely he hath vexed and perſecuted Mr. *Chambers*, Mr. *Thomas*, Mr. *Croake*, Mr. *Newton*, Mr. *Barnard*, Mr. *Cunnant*, Mr. *Roſwell*, and many other good and painefull Miniſters of the Dioceſſe, and countenanced his Chaplaine Mr. *Egliſfield*, *Gawler*, and Mr. *Long*, with other vitious Miniſters, and Mr. *Huiſh* and others ſuperſtitiouſly affected.

13. That the ſaid Biſhop according to Law did ſeverely exact and impoſe upon divers of the Clergie within his Dioceſſe, the new Oath preſcribed by the ſixt Canon of the late pretended Synod, and cauſed and inforced them to take the ſaid illegall Oath, himſelfe kiſſing the Seale or the Commiſſion which authorized him to exact the ſaid Oath of his Clergy, and kneeling downe upon his knees tooke the Oath firſt, and then adminiſtred it to others; ſaying, that *he was glad in his heart that this Oath was impoſed upon all the Clergy of England, for now the true Children of the Church would be knowne from the ſpurious and Baſtards.* And farther he hath deſired to conferre Orders upon ſuch who refuſed to take the Oath, as namely, upon one Mr. *Gibbens*. And hath enforced the ſaid Oath upon divers, he hath ordained Miniſters ſince the making thereof.

14. That the ſaid Biſhop was a great fomenter and incourager of the late diviſions and warres betweene the Kingdoms of *England and Scotland* conventing and urging the Clergy of his Dioceſſe to contribute a a liberall benevolence towards the maintenance of the ſaid warres, uſing this ſpeech as one motive to induce them to this contribution; *that it was* * *Bellum Epiſcopale* and ſaing, *that what ever cauſe the King had expreſſed in the Declaration yet in truth this war was for us*, meaning *us the Biſhops*. And whereas ſome of the Clergie denied the payment of ſo large a *Benevolence* as the ſaid Biſhop demanded, in regard of their poverty, and becauſe they were ſtill in their firſt fruits, when they were free

* Biſhop Hall labours to excuſe it, in his Anſwer to the vindication. p. 14. 15. as if the Biſhop meant it only in a leſs evil conſtruction, as referring to the northern uſe of that quarrell, not our proſecution, when as it is moſt cleare by the words and circumſtances, that he meant quite contrary.

free from *Subsidies*, the said Bishop threatned by his power to put more Armes and Horses upon them, saying, *that is they would not serve the King with their purses, they should serve him with their Armes.* And thereupon compelled them to pay the summes he demanded of them against Law: as namely, Mr. *Roswell*, Mr. *Iames*, Mr. *Abbot*, and others, And not contented herewith, the said Bishop pretending that there was divers poore Vicars and Ministers in his Dioceſſe that were not able to pay the benevolence, so that he could not raise the summe hee expected, thereupon directed his letters to divers of his welthier Clergie, causing some of them to pay a * second contribution.

* Which some of the Countie conceive hee hath pursed up or discharged his owne share in this contribution therewith.

15. That the said Bishop not content with this first benevolence hath since that compelled divers of his Clergy to pay all or part of the sixe illegall subsidies or benevolences imposed by the late pretended Synod, without confirmation of Parliament, threatning to excommunicate and deprive them *ipso facto* who failed payment of it at the dayes prefixed by the Synod, and sent out a proces to Mr. *Newton*, minister of *Taunton* (even whiles the said Towne was much visited by the pestilence) long before the said Subsidy or Benevolence was due, to enjoyne him to pay it punctually at the day, or else hee would inflict on him the penalties prescribed by this Synod; and used these speeches, that *if they did not pay the said Subsidies or Benevolence, they should be ground to powder.*

16. And the said Commons by Protestation saving to themselves the libertie of exhibiting at any time hereafter any other accusation or impeachment against the said Bishop; And also of replying to the answers that he said Bishop shall make unto the said Articles, or to any of them, and of offering proofes also of the premisses or any of them, or any other impeachment or occasion that shall be exhibited by them (as the cause shall according to the course of Parliaments require) doe pray that the said Bishop may be put to answer to all and every the premisses. And that such proceedings, examinations, tryalls, and judgements may bee upon every of them had and used, as is agreeable to Law and Justice.

By these Articles of impeachment you may easily discover what a desperately prophane, impious, turbulent Pilate the Bishop is, even such a one, whom no age (I thinke) in many particulars is able to paralell, whose prodigiously prophane speeches and actions proclaies to all the world, that our present Pilates impieties have made them fit for judgement; yea good for nothing but to be cast out and trampled under feete of men, as the very excrements and off-scouringsof all things.

FINIS.